



"Current" News

Summer/Fall 2014

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Welcome!

- Join us in welcoming our new Superintendent, Rick Clark, to Missouri National Recreational River. Rick joined our staff in January of 2014.
- Thanks to Steve Thede, MNRR Acting Superintendent from April to November 2013. Steve is now the Superintendent at Niobrara National Scenic River in Valentine, NE.

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Mobile Ranger Station: Bringing the Park to the People

Going Mobile has taken on a new meaning here at the Missouri National Recreational River. With the completion of the Mobile Ranger Station, park rangers have a new vehicle to convey park information and to create awareness about the MNRR. Up and down the stretches of the park, from Fort Randall to Ponca State Park and beyond, the mobile unit has traversed the highways and byways of South Dakota, Nebraska, and Iowa.



Rangers and Teacher-Ranger-Teachers enjoyed interacting with visitors and the new Mobile Ranger Station throughout the summer.

Stops along the way included special events with our partners at state parks, county fairs, outdoor expos, nature centers, wagon trains, and summer community celebrations.

Dugan Smith, acting Chief of Interpretation and Education, came up with the idea to build a visitors' center on wheels and is pleased with the results.

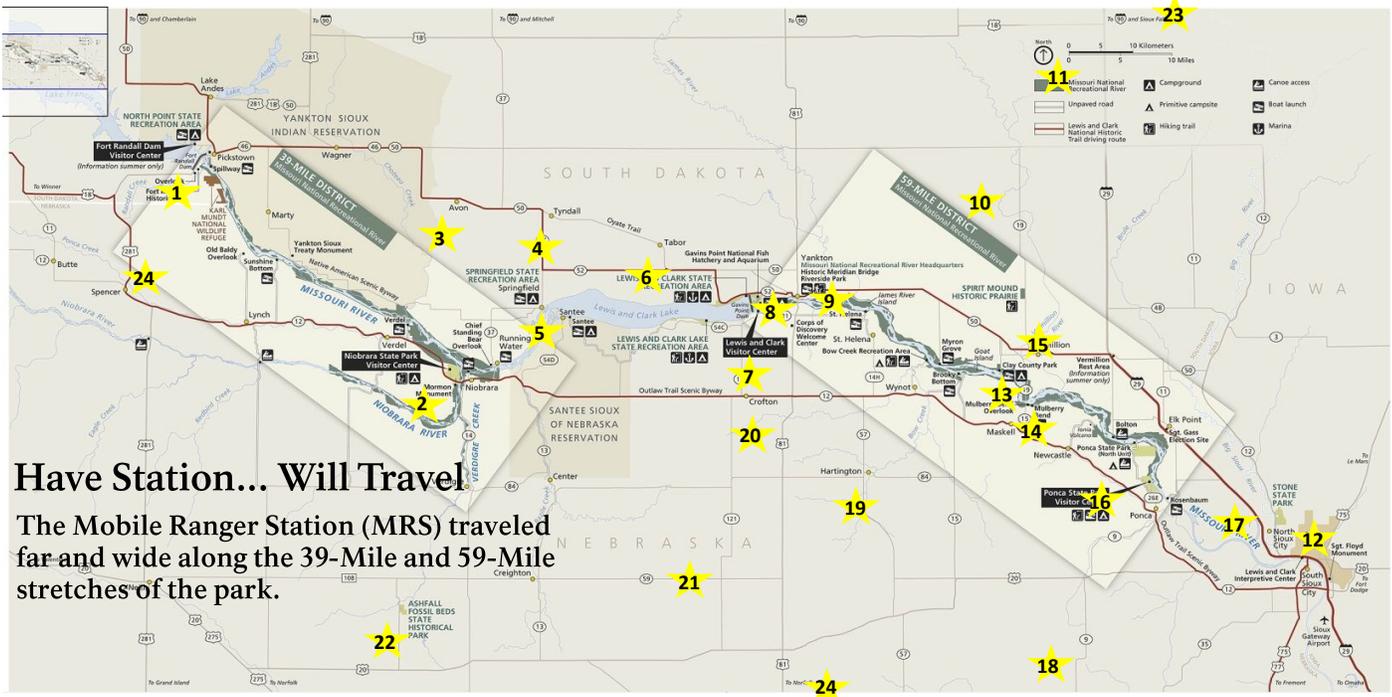
"This is a real game changer for the park", Smith said. "We are no longer asking visitors to come to us, instead we are bringing the park to them."



The Mobile Ranger Station is the first of its kind within the entire NPS system. It proved its worth as countless calls from event organizers came in requesting site visits from the Mobile Ranger Station. The calendar quickly filled in as efforts were made to truly take the park to the people.

At every bend of the road, people of all ages made their way up the ramp to see the trailers interior, some even following the path of the river on the trailer floor to enter. (Photo at left)

Visitors from as far away as Norway and as close as Yankton learned about the river and its "Outstanding Remarkable Values". Whether they were reading the informative panels, engaged by the large interactive map of the park, challenged by the puzzle pieces or the prize wheel questions, visitors welcomed the varied components of the Mobile Ranger Station.



Have Station... Will Travel
 The Mobile Ranger Station (MRS) traveled far and wide along the 39-Mile and 59-Mile stretches of the park.

- 1 Fort Randall—The MRS joined in on the “Fort To Field 50” Kayak race which started below the dam.
- 2 Niobrara State Park—Our “park on wheels” provided several special events for visitors to “Discover the Real Missouri”
- 3 Avon, SD—The MRS helped celebrate “An Old Fashioned Saturday Night” in this South Dakota community.
- 4 Tyndall, SD—Food and Fun draws a crowd for their Hotdog Days and the Mobile Ranger Station.
- 5 Springfield, SD—The 4th of July is always a highlight of the summer and the MRS joined in the town’s celebration.
- 6 Tabor, SD—Homemade kolaches were the order of the day for the trip to Tabor Czech Days.
- 7 Omaha, NE—Dedication of the National Park Service’s first Mobile Ranger Station at the Lewis and Clark National Trail Headquarters.
- 8 Lewis and Clark State Park—Our closest neighbors and partners to the park joined forces for several events including a favorite, Homestead Days at Pierson’s Ranch.
- 9 Yankton, SD—Yankton remains the home base for our park, with Riverboat Days, the Statehood Wagon Train, River Rendesvous, and Water Festival.
- 10 Wakonda, SD—Elementary students enjoyed a morning with the rangers visiting the mobile ranger station and learning about the national park near them.
- 11 Newton Hills State Park—The MRS made two trips to the Hills in July and October. The FestiFall was one of the last stops .
- 12 Sioux City—This educational event was well attended; rangers were able to visit with over 400 students and teachers.



- 13 Clay County Park—The 8th Annual River Appreciation Day for area 6th graders brought lots of visitors to the river and the MRS.
- 14 Mulberry Bend Overlook—The MRS was part of the grand opening event for the new woodland hiking trail at the overlook.
- 15 Vermillion, SD—The Mobile Ranger Station was part of the midway activity at the Clay County Fair .
- 16 Ponca State Park—A destination for many trips, but by far the highlight was the Missouri Expo where the MRS was featured in front of over 50,000 outdoor enthusiasts.
- 17 Adams Homestead—The MRS visit to the homestead and nature preserve featured a lesson on frogs in the MNRR and their important role as an indicator species.
- 18 Laurel, NE—Touring bicyclists stopped by the trailer to learn about the park and visit with the rangers after their long trek.
- 19 Hartington, NE —Rangers presented a program on frogs at the library and was open to the general public on main street for the day.
- 20 Crofton, NE—The community park was the destination of the day for another Bike Tour and the MRS was on hand to greet them.
- 21 Bloomfield, NE—The Knox County Fair was another festive day to share the MRS and the national park nearby.
- 22 Ashfall Fossil Beds—Joining in on the annual Fossil and Artifact Identification Day provided an avid audience for the MRS.
- 23 Madison Science Expo—The ranger station traveled to Madison, NE where area students took part in the learning activities of the day.
- 24 Spencer Turkey Days—The 19th annual event in Spencer, NE signaled the end of the trail for the Mobile Ranger Station this season.

A New Trail at the Mulberry Bend Overlook

The Mulberry Bend Overlook, located on the Nebraska side of the Vermillion-Newcastle Bridge, has been a fixture on the landscape since 2005. A short walk up three switchbacks is rewarded with a sweeping view of Mulberry Bend and the wild and scenic Missouri National Recreational River. For most visitors, the adventure at the overlook ended there.

However, the experience no longer stops at the overlook atop the bluff. The Mulberry Bend Overlook now hosts a 0.75 mile backcountry trail through the predominantly oak forest below the bluff top.



The new trails are marked and ready for hikers to explore.

This new trail exposes visitors to an entirely new experience and opportunity for adventure. The dense oak hardwood forest includes bur oak trees over 150 years old. Native grasses and plants offer a sanctuary to numerous bird species, and spur trails offer a new



Two trail “spurs” provide new perspectives of the Missouri River at Mulberry Bend. The views alone will be worth a departure from the main loop trail.

opportunity at Mulberry Bend to view its extensive river vistas.

“A great deal of hard work and collaboration has gone into the completion of the Mulberry Bend Hiking Trail and we are excited to announce that the trail is open for the public to enjoy,” said park Biologist Lisa Yager.



The backcountry trail at Mulberry Bend provides a refreshing walk through the woods and opens up more of the NPS-owned property for exploration.

Future plans for the trail and property include cedar tree removal and prescribed fire to help return the property to its previous status as an oak savannah. Hikers will see recently cut cedar trees and piles of cedar waiting to be removed from the property.

When you go:

- The trailhead is located at the top overlook. Trail guides are available online and at the trailhead. Trail signs will guide and orient hikers.
- Wear comfortable and sturdy shoes. Footing may be uneven or slippery at times. The trail is moderately strenuous due to the steep bluff (elevation change of about 140 feet).
- Be aware of poison ivy and prickly ash.
- Carry out all trash and leave no trace of your visit. Stay on the marked trail. Respect private property and do not cross fences.
- All park features, both natural and cultural, are protected by federal law. Please leave everything as you find it.

MNRR Property Management Plan

The National Park Service owns three separate parcels of land along the 59-Mile District of the MNRR:

- The Mulberry Bend Overlook near the Vermillion-Newcastle Bridge was transferred from Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) as mitigation for bridge construction in 2005.
- Bow Creek Recreation Area near Wynot, NE was purchased from a willing seller in 2004.
- Green Island, directly upstream from the Discovery Bridge in Yankton, was transferred from NDOR in 2014 as mitigation for the new bridge construction.

MNRR is now in the process of developing a property management plan for each property. The management plan will identify actions for recreational site development, resource management, interpretation/education and establish management policy on certain issues, such as access, hunting, and camping.

Management plans for the 60-acre Green Island parcel, the 31-acre Mulberry Bend Overlook parcel, and the 205-acre Bow Creek Recreation Area are necessary for the park to carry out the NPS mission and the congressional mandates found in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act – the enabling legislation of the MNRR. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act identifies policy for designated rivers that is to protect and

enhance the values for which it became a component of the national wild and scenic river system. It also identifies that “[m]anagement plans for any such component may es-



Mulberry Bend Overlook was transferred to MNRR in 2005 as mitigation for the Vermillion-Newcastle Bridge.

tablish varying degrees of intensity for its protection and development based on the special attributes of the area.” A management plan is needed to fulfill the intent of the Congressional designation of MNRR and to guide MNRR activities on the properties now and in the future.

The property management plan process will include public meetings which will allow stakeholders and the general public to participate in developing management alternatives for each MNRR property. The first round of public meetings took place first week of December. Comments received will be used to develop the draft plan, which will be presented to the public this summer at the second round of public meetings.

Do you want to be involved? We want your input! Call our office at (605) 665-0209 to be added to the project mailing list.



Bow Creek Recreation Area includes the confluence of Bow Creek and the Missouri River and is located near Wynot, NE. The low-lying floodplain and bluff property was purchased from a willing seller in 2004.



Green Island was transferred to MNRR in 2014 as mitigation for the Discovery Bridge in Yankton. The island is located directly upstream of the Discovery Bridge.

A Day in the Life of a Seasonal Biological Technician at MNRR

Each summer, MNRR hires seasonal biological technicians to aid in biological monitoring and maintenance activities. Here's a snapshot of their 2014 summer at MNRR.

Turtle Monitoring:

The summer of 2014 was the final year in a three year cycle of turtle monitoring on the MNRR with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. The five most common species are snapping turtle, false map turtle (State listed in SD), smooth soft shell, spiny soft shell, and painted turtles.



A biological technician handles a snapping turtle with great care after removing it from a hoop net. All turtles were measured, tagged, and returned to the river.

Least Tern and Piping Plover Monitoring: Every few weeks, bio-techs canoed the lower Niobrara River in search of these two federally listed bird species. Monitoring included counting the number of adults observed, finding nests, following the progress of nests, and counting chicks hatched.



Water quality probes take instant measurements for basic water quality parameters, like pH, dissolved oxygen, and temperature.

Invertebrates: Water quality and macro-invertebrate (aquatic bugs) monitoring in the Green Island side channel will help MNRR understand the current habitat and compare the side channel to its

previous state as backwater. Probes were used to collect water quality data and a multi-plate sampler was used to collect the macro-invertebrates. The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks assisted with fish surveys.

Water Quality: Water quality measurements were taken at the Green Island side channel as well as selected Missouri River tributaries to gain a sense of the overall quality. Parameters included pH, temperature, Specific conductivity, and dissolved oxygen levels.

Gastropods (snails): A seasonal biological technician designed and implemented a new study focusing on snails. This new initiative found two dominant snail species at the Mulberry Bend Overlook, flamed tigersnails and blunt ambersnails.

Photo points: Something as simple as a photo, repeated from the same location over a long period of time, can be an effective landscape monitoring tool. Photo points were continued at Bow Creek Recreation Area and Mulberry Bend. More photo points were added at Mulberry Bend to document the new trail. New points were also established at Green Island, MNRR's newest property.

General maintenance: Property maintenance also falls under the realm of Resource Management. Bio-techs installed a new fence at Green Island, completed the new trail at Mulberry Bend, mowed grass and picked up trash and recycling at park properties.



Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the seasonal biological technicians, the trail at Mulberry Bend was completed this summer! The trail was one of their many maintenance and property restoration tasks. Learn more about the new trail at Mulberry Bend on page 3.



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Meet Clark the Canoe! This summer Clark, named after Missouri River explorer William Clark, went on a nationwide tour of his National Parks (thanks to the postal service and NPS employees across the country) to see first hand the array of resources the National Park Service protects. Here are a few photos of Clark with the resources in several parks that he visited. Check out Clark's adventure on Twitter!

@MissouriRecNPS